

Halal Food Application Usage and Acceptance among Muslim Students in South Korea

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Abstract

Halal food is a crucial concern for Muslim students in countries with a minority Muslim population, such as South Korea, where less than 35,000 Muslims reside among a predominantly non-religious population. To address halal food accessibility, various applications have been developed. This study identifies the most commonly used halal food applications by Muslim students in South Korea and evaluates their acceptance levels using a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected through interviews and questionnaires based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Findings indicate that Mufko (Halal Food Korea) and Mobpay (Halal Food Korea) are the most frequently used applications, both scoring in the “excellent” category for user acceptance. These applications are highly effective and strongly recommended for addressing the halal food needs of Muslim students in South Korea.

Keywords: Halal food application, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Muslim minority



Introduction

The global Muslim population has increasingly prioritised adherence to Islamic dietary guidelines, especially when residing as minorities in non-Muslim-majority societies. This trend is particularly evident among Muslim students studying abroad, where limited access to halal food and the necessity of complying with religious dietary restrictions present considerable challenges. South Korea, renowned for its dynamic culture and technological advancements, has experienced a growing influx of international students, including those from predominantly Muslim countries. For these students, locating halal food options that meet their religious requirements often proves to be a formidable task (Ahmad et al., 2017; Wan Shahidan et al., 2023).

In response to this need, mobile applications have emerged as critical tools for navigating the local culinary landscape and addressing the challenges of accessing halal food. These applications provide information about halal-certified restaurants, facilitate community engagement, and offer reviews and recommendations. By serving as digital platforms for locating and sharing information about halal food options, such apps have become indispensable resources for Muslim students in South Korea, where halal food availability remains limited. Examining the preferences and acceptance of these halal food applications among Muslim students is essential for understanding how technology interacts with and supports their cultural and religious practices in a foreign context. Insights into user experiences and perspectives can inform the development of more effective and user-friendly halal food applications, ultimately enhancing these students' ability to maintain their dietary requirements while studying abroad (Alfarajat, 2022; Marlinda et al., 2021).

Although South Korea is predominantly non-Muslim, the country has witnessed a steady increase in its Muslim population due to growing international trade, tourism, and educational exchanges. Recent estimates suggest that the Muslim population in South Korea has surpassed 200,000, with a significant proportion comprising international students from Muslim-majority nations. These students face unique challenges related to their dietary practices, as South Korea's diverse culinary offerings—renowned for their variety and flavour—frequently feature pork and other non-halal meats. For Muslim students, adhering to religious dietary restrictions can be an ongoing struggle as they navigate an environment that often lacks halal options or clear labelling of halal-certified establishments. This situation can foster feelings of isolation and create barriers to fully integrating into the local community, as their dietary needs are not always accommodated or understood by the broader population (Goni, 2022).

Halal food, prepared in strict accordance with Islamic dietary laws, excludes pork and any meat not slaughtered in accordance with Islamic rituals. Halal food must also come from animals raised, handled, and slaughtered in ways that comply with Islamic law. For Muslim students in South Korea, maintaining these dietary restrictions can be complex without access to reliable information on halal-certified establishments. The lack of readily available information about halal-compliant restaurants and grocery stores, coupled with

language barriers and cultural differences, compounds these challenges. Consequently, the critical need for accessible and accurate sources of information, such as halal food applications, becomes evident. These tools play an essential role in helping Muslim students maintain their religious dietary practices and integrate more effectively into their host environment while studying abroad (Amron & Noh, 2021).

The development of halal food applications represents a significant advancement in addressing the challenges faced by Muslim students in South Korea. These applications offer a wide range of functionalities, including the identification of halal-certified restaurants and grocery stores, dissemination of reviews, and user-generated content to assist in decision-making processes. Additionally, these apps foster a sense of community among users by enabling the sharing of experiences and recommendations, thereby creating a supportive network for Muslims navigating South Korea's predominantly non-Muslim culinary landscape. By leveraging technology, these applications empower users to locate and evaluate halal establishments, exchange information, and engage with a like-minded community. This, in turn, enhances their ability to maintain religious dietary practices while pursuing their education abroad (Alalwan, 2020; Amin et al., 2016).

Examining the preferences and acceptance of halal food applications among Muslim students in South Korea reveals several critical academic implications. Firstly, it demonstrates how technology can serve as a bridge to integrate minority dietary practices into a non-Muslim majority context. Secondly, it provides valuable insights into the socio-cultural adaptation strategies employed by Muslim students, illustrating how they navigate religious observances in unfamiliar environments. Thirdly, it offers essential information to key stakeholders—such as app developers, policymakers, and halal certification bodies—about the specific needs and preferences of this demographic, enabling them to enhance the accessibility and usability of halal food services in South Korea (Alfarajat, 2022).

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the preferences and acceptance of halal food applications among Muslim students in South Korea. Specifically, the study seeks to assess satisfaction levels and perceptions of usability among users and to explore the role of halal food applications in fostering social integration and community engagement among Muslim students. By achieving these objectives, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how halal food applications are utilised, perceived, and integrated into the daily lives of Muslim students in South Korea.

This study employed a mixed-method, exploratory approach to examine the preferences and acceptance of halal food applications. The researchers utilised open-ended interviews to gather qualitative data from participants, followed by a closed-ended questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis, which includes constructs such as Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Behavioural Intention (BI), and Actual System Use (AU) (Khine & Afari, 2014; Scherer et al., 2019).

The study involved a purposive sample of eight Muslim students enrolled at Kangwon National University, all of whom voluntarily participated in the research. These partici-

pants shared their unique perspectives and experiences as Muslim students navigating the challenges of accessing halal-compliant food in South Korea—a significant issue for them. The sample represents a subset of the broader Muslim student population in South Korea, providing insights into a demographic that faces unique dietary and cultural challenges in a non-Muslim majority environment (Ta et al., 2023).

The qualitative data analysis in this study followed the Miles and Huberman approach, which comprises three distinct stages. The first stage, data reduction, involved compiling and organising all relevant data and information deemed useful for the research objectives. This process helped streamline the data by focusing on essential elements while discarding irrelevant information. The second stage, data display, involved presenting the refined data in a clear and structured format, such as a narrative summary, to facilitate interpretation and analysis. The final stage, drawing conclusions, entailed synthesising the findings by outlining the methodological approach employed during the interviews. These insights were then interpreted using the scoring framework proposed by Sugiyono (Kristiantari, 2021).

For the quantitative data analysis, a Likert scale was employed, supported by descriptive statistical methods using SPSS 25.0 software. This analysis involved calculating the acceptance scores of Muslim students and aggregating these scores at each classification level to generate a comprehensive understanding of the results. By integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study provides a nuanced and robust analysis of the acceptance and usage of halal food applications among Muslim students.

Interval of frequency	Classification level
81% - 100%	Excellent
61% - 80%	Very Good
41% - 60%	Good
21% - 40%	Poor
0% - 20%	Very Poor

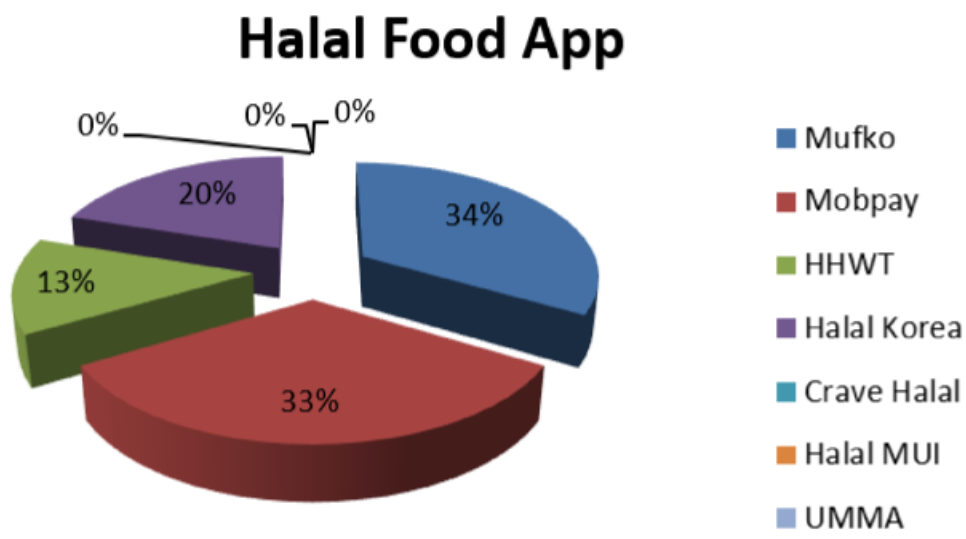
Table.1 Classification Level

Preferences for Halal Food Applications Among Muslim Students

This study investigates the preferences and usage patterns of halal food applications among Muslim students, who represent a religious minority in South Korea. The research aims to explore how these mobile applications assist Muslim students in overcoming the challenges of accessing halal-compliant food in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. To achieve this objective, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining data collection through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with the participants.

The findings, as illustrated in the accompanying figure, shed light on the specific halal food applications frequently used by Muslim students, highlighting their functionality and effectiveness in addressing dietary needs. Additionally, the study examines the students' overall perceptions of these technological solutions, providing valuable insights into how such applications support their adherence to religious dietary practices while enhancing their integration into South Korean society. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of technology in facilitating religious observances in multicultural contexts.

Figure 1. Halal Food Application Usage Utilised by Muslim Students



The results of a questionnaire administered to Muslim students highlight their preferences for halal food applications used to address the challenges of accessing halal-compliant food in South Korea, a predominantly non-Muslim country. The survey findings reveal that Mufko and Mobpay were the two most commonly utilised applications, with 34% and 33% of the eight participants reporting their use, respectively. Additionally, Halal Korea was used by 20% of the participants, while HHWT was utilised by 13%. The remaining applications, including Crave Halal, Halal MUI, and UMMA, were not used by any of the participants. These results indicate that Mufko and Mobpay were the most preferred halal food applications among the Muslim students surveyed, underscoring their significance in addressing halal food accessibility issues faced by this minority community in South Korea (Hijrah et al., 2021).

The Mufko application, also known as Muslim Friendly Korea, was developed to cater to the unique needs of Muslims residing in or visiting South Korea. Its primary objective is to facilitate access to halal-compliant food and other religious necessities. Mufko provides detailed, accurate, and up-to-date information, thereby significantly enhancing the expe-

riences of Muslim individuals in this predominantly non-Muslim nation. Notably, Mufko has been certified and endorsed by the Korea Muslim Federation—a body comparable to the Majelis Ulama Indonesia—as well as the South Korean government, affirming its legitimacy and reliability (Goni, 2022).

Figure 2. Mufko (Muslim Friendly Korea) Application



The Mufko application offers a comprehensive range of features tailored to the diverse needs of Muslim students and travellers in South Korea. One key feature is its halal barcode scanner, which allows users to verify the halal status of food products instantly, enabling them to make informed purchasing decisions confidently. The application also provides detailed information about the locations of mosques and prayer facilities throughout South Korea, helping Muslim users fulfil their religious obligations with ease. Furthermore, Mufko fosters community engagement by offering Muslim-specific discussion forums where users can connect with peers, share experiences, and seek advice on living as a religious minority in South Korea. Additionally, Mufko provides precise prayer time schedules and Qibla direction guidance, seamlessly integrating religious practices into daily routines. These features, combined with additional tools and resources, ensure a holistic approach to meeting the religious and dietary needs of its users (Akram et al., 2020).

While the Mufko application provides numerous benefits, it is not without its limitations. One primary challenge is the need for continuous updates to its database of halal food information, which is essential given the dynamic nature of food availability and certification. Another notable limitation is the underutilisation of discussion forums and community engagement features, which could be further developed to address the specific needs of Muslim users within the South Korean context. The limited availability of updated information on halal-certified restaurants, grocery stores, and food establishments poses a significant challenge for Muslim students and residents attempting to meet their dietary requirements. Moreover, the discussion forums, which have the potential to foster a stronger sense of community and mutual support, require enhancements to improve user

interaction and engagement.

The Mufko application, with its multifaceted features and functionalities, represents a vital resource for the Muslim community in South Korea. Despite its limitations, its contributions to improving halal food accessibility and supporting religious practices are undeniable. Further development and refinement of its features could significantly enhance its utility, making it an indispensable tool for Muslim students and residents navigating life in South Korea.

Conversely, the application's strengths lie in its free accessibility, user-friendly and intuitive interface, and absence of intrusive advertisements. These features significantly enhance the overall user experience and ensure that the application remains accessible to a broader demographic, including Muslim students and community members. However, the application's limitation in requiring constant internet connectivity restricts its utility in areas with poor internet access or for users without mobile devices. Introducing offline functionality or expanding the platform to include a desktop version could address these limitations, making the application more versatile and convenient for its target users.

In addition, the Mobpay application serves as a comprehensive online marketplace, offering a diverse range of high-quality products and services tailored to the needs of the Muslim population in South Korea. Beyond merely providing access to halal food, Mobpay features an extensive product catalogue encompassing fresh produce, skincare products, cosmetics, and even electronic goods. This breadth of offerings ensures that users can meet their daily needs through a single, convenient platform. The products available on Mobpay are sourced from countries with significant Muslim communities, including South Korea and Indonesia, providing users with a diverse selection that accommodates their preferences and requirements.

The application's credibility and reliability are further enhanced by its strong endorsement and support from the South Korean government, which underscores its legitimacy as a trusted resource for Muslim students, residents, and tourists. This governmental backing makes Mobpay particularly valuable, as it empowers the Muslim minority in South Korea to access halal-compliant food and other essential items with confidence and ease. By facilitating convenient and reliable access to these necessities, Mobpay plays a crucial role in addressing the unique challenges faced by Muslims navigating daily life in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. The following image showcases the logo of Mobpay (Halal Food Online Store).



Figure 3. Mobpay (Halal Food Online store) Application

The Mobpay application is an online marketplace that offers a diverse range of high-quality goods and services, catering specifically to the needs of the Muslim population in South Korea. Beyond halal food items, the application provides access to fresh vegetables, fish, body and skincare products, cosmetics, and electronic goods. To attract more customers, Mobpay also features a variety of attractive discounts, further enhancing its appeal. For Muslim students and tourists visiting South Korea, Mobpay serves as a highly recommended one-stop solution for fulfilling daily needs, including halal-compliant food and other essential items. Its broad product offerings, coupled with competitive pricing, make it an invaluable resource for the Muslim community in a predominantly non-Muslim environment.

From an evaluative perspective, the Mobpay application has both strengths and limitations. Among its disadvantages are relatively high delivery costs and a limited selection of electronic goods and cosmetics. However, the application excels in other aspects. It offers fresh vegetables and fish with one-day delivery options, ensuring timely access to perishable goods. Additionally, Mobpay is free to install, easy to navigate, and free from intrusive advertisements, enhancing the overall user experience. These advantages make Mobpay a highly recommended tool for addressing the challenges of finding halal food in South Korea.

In conclusion, both Mufko and Mobpay play critical roles in alleviating the difficulties Muslim students and residents face in accessing halal-compliant cuisine in South Korea. These applications provide essential services and resources that enhance convenience and comfort for this religious minority group. Mufko offers a comprehensive suite of features, including a halal barcode scanner, information on mosques and prayer facilities, prayer schedules, and Qibla direction guidance. Mobpay, on the other hand, functions as an online marketplace offering an extensive range of halal products, such as fresh produce, personal care items, and cosmetics. Both applications enjoy the endorsement of the South

Korean government, bolstering their credibility and reliability as tools for navigating halal dietary requirements. Therefore, Muslim students, residents, and tourists in South Korea are strongly encouraged to utilise these applications to address their halal food challenges and enhance their overall experience.

The Acceptance of the Mufko (Muslim Friendly Korea) Application Among Muslim Students

The second research objective of this study aimed to investigate and analyse the level of acceptance and perceptions held by Muslim students towards the Mufko application, a widely used halal food application in South Korea. To address this objective comprehensively, the researchers employed a mixed-methods approach. A structured questionnaire was administered to eight Muslim student respondents, providing quantitative insights into their experiences and views on the Mufko application. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with two randomly selected Muslim students, offering qualitative perspectives that enriched the overall analysis.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed the researchers to capture a detailed and multifaceted understanding of the acceptance and attitudes of Muslim students towards the Mufko application. The findings from the questionnaire and the interviews are synthesised in the subsequent table and discussion, highlighting the factors influencing the acceptance and usability of the Mufko application within this demographic.

Variabel	Sample	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	8	4	5	4.80	96%
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	8	4	5	4.80	96%
Behavioral Intention (BI)	8	4	5	4.60	92%
Actual System Use (AU)	8	3	5	3.80	76%
Total Average					90%

Table 2. Acceptance of the Mufko (Muslim Friendly Korea) Application Among Muslim Students

The summary statistics in Table 2 illustrate a high level of acceptance for the Mufko application among the surveyed Muslim students. The Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) metrics both achieved mean scores of 4.80, corresponding to an excellent rating of 96%. This indicates that students perceive the application as highly beneficial and user-friendly for meeting their halal food requirements. The Behavioural Intention (BI) metric scored 4.60, equating to 92%, categorised as very good, while Actual System Use (AU) received a mean score of 3.80, or 76%, also in the very good range. Collectively, the average score across all four indicators was 90%, placing the Mufko application within the excellent category. These findings demonstrate strong acceptance of the application among the Muslim student population, as assessed using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework (Momani, 2020).

The Perceived Usefulness section evaluates how Muslim students view the Mufko application's ability to address halal food-related challenges faced by the Muslim minority in South Korea. This aspect is subdivided into four key areas: the app's capacity to enhance efficiency in locating halal food, save time in verifying halal options, offer unique and valuable features, and meet the broader needs of Muslim users. The average score of 96% signifies an exceptional level of acceptance, affirming the app's effectiveness. Beyond helping students locate and verify halal food, the Mufko application also provides advanced features such as a halal barcode scanner, comprehensive listings of halal restaurants in South Korea, information on mosques and prayer facilities, a Muslim discussion forum, and prayer time and Qibla direction guidance. The questionnaire results are substantiated by student interview findings, which further reinforce the app's utility.

The Perceived Ease of Use dimension assesses the app's user-friendliness and intuitive design from the perspective of Muslim students. According to Bunt (2010), user experience plays a critical role in determining the acceptability of technology solutions. During interviews, one respondent elaborated on the dual functionality of the Mufko application:

"The Mufko (Muslim Friendly Korea) App has two functions, namely the general function as a channel connecting Muslims and Korean citizens, while the special function provides information on halal food services and places of worship in South Korea. It features a halal barcode scanner, information on halal restaurants in Korea, prayer rooms and mosques, Muslim discussion forums, prayer times, and Qibla direction."

The interview findings confirm that the Mufko application not only facilitates the identification of halal food but also provides a comprehensive suite of services to support the needs of Muslim students in South Korea. The halal barcode scanner allows users to swiftly verify compliant products, while detailed directories of halal restaurants and prayer facilities, along with tools for prayer times and Qibla direction, ensure seamless integration of religious practices into daily life. Furthermore, the Muslim discussion forum fosters a sense of community by enabling users to connect, share experiences, and seek advice.

Based on the assessment of Perceived Usefulness, the Mufko application unequivocally falls into the excellent category. It is strongly recommended for Muslim students in

South Korea as an essential tool for navigating the challenges of accessing halal food and maintaining their religious obligations in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. The comprehensive features and high levels of user satisfaction underscore its value as a vital resource for the Muslim student population.

The second section, Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), evaluates Muslim students' perceptions of the Mufko application's user-friendliness and intuitiveness. This section comprises three questions that assess whether the Mufko application is easy to use, convenient, and user-friendly, and whether it requires any training to operate. The average score of 96% signifies an excellent level of acceptance for the Mufko application in terms of ease of use. This is largely due to its free availability, the absence of advertisements, and its simple and intuitive interface. However, the app does require an internet connection to function, which may present a minor limitation. The students' responses during interviews provide further insights into the application's usability.

One participant remarked:

"The Mufko (Muslim Friendly Korea) App can be downloaded and installed freely, there is no advertising, and the menu or features are easy to use" (P2).

The Mufko application is designed to be highly user-friendly, requiring no specialised training or technical expertise from its users. According to the interview findings, the app's features are straightforward to navigate, ensuring a seamless user experience. Despite the requirement for an active internet connection, users reported that the app was remarkably easy to operate. One significant advantage is the absence of disruptive advertisements, which are often a source of frustration in other mobile applications. The lack of intrusive ads enhances the overall user experience, allowing Muslim students to focus on the app's core functionalities without distractions. This combination of user-friendliness, intuitive design, and ad-free operation makes the Mufko application an appealing and reliable tool for Muslim students in South Korea who seek halal food options in their local area.

The third section focuses on Behavioural Intention (BI), which explores Muslim students' intentions to recommend and continue using the Mufko application to address their halal food-related challenges. This section includes three statements assessing the students' intention to increase their usage of the application, their willingness to recommend it to other Muslim students, and their interest in utilising the app for their daily needs. The average score of 92% indicates a very high level of acceptance in this category. This high acceptance can be attributed to the critical importance of halal food for Muslim students and the technological convenience offered by the Mufko application in addressing their dietary requirements.

One participant commented:

"I highly recommend this app to all Muslim students in KNU because it really helps us find halal food and meets some Muslim needs, such as finding a mushola/mosque, halal restaurants, prayer times, and Qibla direction" (P2).

The findings underline the significant behavioural intention among students to adopt and promote the use of the Mufko application. The app's ability to assist with essential aspects of Muslim daily life, including locating halal food, prayer facilities, and other religious resources, reinforces its value and credibility. Its intuitive design and practical features make it a highly recommended tool for Muslim students navigating the challenges of maintaining religious practices in a predominantly non-Muslim country.

From the interview results, it can be concluded that the Mufko application plays a crucial role in assisting Muslim users in locating halal food in South Korea. Its frequent use and positive feedback from users highlight its importance in meeting the dietary requirements of the Muslim community. Beyond facilitating the search for and verification of halal food, the application offers additional valuable features, including information on halal restaurants, mosques, prayer times, and a discussion forum. This multifaceted approach positions the Mufko application as an indispensable resource for Muslim minority students in South Korea, enabling them to navigate the challenges of living in a predominantly non-Muslim country with greater ease and confidence. The findings strongly suggest that Mufko is highly regarded and effective in addressing the diverse needs of the Muslim community, making it an essential tool for those seeking halal food and related services.

The fourth section, Actual System Use (AU), refers to the frequency with which users rely on the application to meet their halal food needs while residing in South Korea as a Muslim minority. This section consists of two key statements: (1) "I use Mufko on a daily basis," and (2) "I use the Mufko application frequently." The average score of 76% indicates a "very good" level of acceptance in this category, reflecting the application's importance in fulfilling a primary need—access to halal food. One participant shared:

"I have stayed in Korea for around two years, and I always use Mufko to help me find halal food." (P1)

The high frequency of use and the positive feedback from interviews underscore the vital role the Mufko application plays in addressing the halal food needs of Muslim users in South Korea. These findings reaffirm the app's significance as a valued and effective solution for catering to the needs of the Muslim minority.

In conclusion, the Mufko application is highly valued and effective among Muslim students in South Korea. It not only fulfils their halal food requirements but also provides essential services such as locating mosques, managing prayer times, and fostering community engagement through discussion forums. The app's high scores across various metrics—perceived usefulness, ease of use, strong user intention, and frequent actual usage—demonstrate its excellence. Its comprehensive features and functionalities cater to a wide range of needs, from accessing halal food options to maintaining religious practices and connecting with the broader Muslim community. This holistic approach has made the Mufko application an invaluable resource for Muslim students, empowering them to navigate the challenges of living in a non-Muslim-majority country with greater confidence and convenience.

The Muslim Students’ Acceptance of Using the Mobpay (Halal Food Online Store) Application

The third research objective of this study focuses on examining Muslim students’ acceptance and perceptions of the Mobpay application, a mobile platform specifically designed to facilitate access to halal food options for individuals living in South Korea. To collect detailed and comprehensive data, the researchers adopted a mixed-method approach. Initially, a questionnaire was administered to eight Muslim student respondents to obtain quantitative insights. This was supplemented with in-depth interviews conducted with two randomly selected students from the participant group, providing qualitative perspectives on their experiences and views regarding the Mobpay application. The questionnaire results, exploring various dimensions of the Muslim students’ acceptance and utilisation of the Mobpay application, are summarised in the table below.

Variabel	Sample	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	8	4	5	4.80	96%
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	8	3	5	4.40	88%
Behavioral Intention (BI)	8	4	5	4.60	92%
Actual System Use (AU)	8	3	5	4.40	88%
Total Average					91%

Table 3. Muslim Students’ Acceptance of Using the Mobpay Application

Table 3 presents a detailed analysis of the mean values and corresponding index percentages for the key indicators examined regarding Muslim students’ acceptance of the Mobpay application. The first indicator, Perceived Usefulness (PU), achieved an exceptional mean score of 4.80 with an index percentage of 96%, categorising it firmly in the “excellent” range. This high rating underscores the students’ perception of Mobpay as a highly effective solution for addressing their challenges in accessing halal food and related items. The second indicator, Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), received a mean score of 4.40 and an index percentage of 88%, also classified within the “excellent” category. This suggests that the Mobpay application is perceived as user-friendly, convenient, and intuitive, requiring little to no technical expertise to navigate effectively.

The Perceived Usefulness section explores how Muslim students evaluate the practical benefits of the Mobpay application in resolving halal food accessibility issues. This segment

includes four key questions: (1) whether Mobpay enhances efficiency in finding halal food and other essentials in South Korea, (2) whether it saves time in locating halal products, (3) whether it offers distinctive and useful features, and (4) whether it serves as an all-encompassing application for Muslim needs. The impressive 96% average score indicates that the app is widely accepted and highly valued among the students. Notably, Mobpay is perceived as particularly beneficial for its range of offerings, which include halal-certified food items such as instant rice, fish, meat, chicken, frozen food, fresh fruits and vegetables, and essential goods like skincare products, cosmetics, toiletries, and electronic devices. While the availability of cosmetics and electronic items is somewhat limited, the app compensates by offering a one-day delivery service for halal food, a critical feature that further enhances its utility. These findings from the questionnaire are corroborated by insights gleaned from student interviews (Yaacob et al., 2023).

One respondent noted:

“I feel greatly supported by the Mobpay (Halal Food Online Store) application, not only in meeting my daily needs for food, drinks, and other halal essentials but also for providing electronic devices. Although the selection of electronics and cosmetics is somewhat limited, the one-day delivery option for halal food is incredibly convenient. Overall, Mobpay serves as a fairly comprehensive online marketplace.” (P1)

The interview results affirm that Muslim students in South Korea find the Mobpay application to be both highly useful and effective. It is particularly praised for its efficiency in helping users locate halal food and other necessary items while residing in a predominantly non-Muslim country. Mobpay stands out for its broad range of halal-certified products, including groceries, personal care items, and even electronic goods, albeit in limited quantities. The application’s ability to combine diverse offerings with user-friendly functionality makes it an indispensable tool for Muslim students navigating dietary and religious requirements in South Korea. The positive reception evident in both the questionnaire data and interview feedback demonstrates that Mobpay effectively addresses the multifaceted needs of its users, solidifying its role as a reliable and comprehensive solution.

The second section, Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), evaluates how Muslim students perceive the ease of using the Mobpay application without encountering obstacles during installation and operation. This section includes three key questions: (1) whether the Mobpay application is easy to use, (2) whether it is convenient and user-friendly, and (3) whether it requires no training for effective use. The average score of 88% places the application in the “excellent” category of acceptance. Although the application requires an active internet connection for use, it is free to download and install and does not feature disruptive advertisements, enhancing its accessibility and user experience (Burda et al., 2022).

One respondent stated:

“There is no advertising, no download or installation fees, and an intuitive menu and features make the Mobpay (Halal Food Online Store) App suitable for all users.” (P2)

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Muslim students in South Korea

perceive the Mobpay application as highly easy to use and user-friendly. The application is commended for its ad-free experience, absence of download or installation fees, and intuitive design, which make it suitable for all users, even those who may lack prior experience with similar platforms. These attributes significantly contribute to its widespread acceptance among Muslim students. Overall, the app meets and often exceeds usability expectations, highlighting its thoughtful design and practical value for its users (Lin et al., 2019).

The third section, Behavioral Intention (BI), examines Muslim students' intentions to recommend and continue using the Mobpay application to address halal food-related challenges. This section includes three statements: (1) the intention to increase the use of the Mobpay application, (2) the willingness to recommend the app to other Muslim students, and (3) interest in using Mobpay to fulfil daily needs. The average score of 92% indicates an "excellent" level of acceptance. Given the importance of halal food for Muslim students and the advancements in technology, applications such as Mobpay play a crucial role in determining the halal status of food items and meeting daily needs (Petiwala et al., 2021).

One respondent emphasised:

"All Muslim students at KNU should definitely download this app, as it really helps us locate halal food and is useful for other Muslim needs." (P2)

These findings highlight that Muslim students in South Korea have a strong behavioural intention to use and recommend the Mobpay application. It is regarded as highly effective in addressing the specific needs of Muslim students, not only for accessing halal food but also for fulfilling a wide range of other daily necessities. The app's ability to leverage technology to support the dietary and religious needs of this minority group is particularly noteworthy.

In conclusion, the Mobpay application is exceptionally well-received among Muslim students in South Korea. It is not only highly recommended but also plays a vital role in supporting the Muslim community by providing a comprehensive solution to halal food challenges and meeting other specific needs. The app's design, functionality, and user-focused features make it an indispensable tool for Muslim students navigating life in a predominantly non-Muslim country. Its effectiveness underscores its importance as a reliable resource, facilitating convenience and inclusivity for the Muslim minority in South Korea.

The fourth section, Actual System Use, refers to how frequently Muslim students utilise the Mobpay application to meet their halal food needs during their stay in South Korea as a religious minority. This section includes two key statements: "I use the Mobpay Application on a daily basis" and "I use the Mobpay Application frequently." The average score of 88% categorises the acceptance of the Mobpay application as excellent. These findings suggest that the application is integral to the daily lives of Muslim students at Kangwon National University, and it is strongly recommended that all Muslim students download and use it to address their halal food requirements and other essential needs (Khosravi et al., 2017).

One student remarked:

“After spending over two years in Korea, I always utilise the Mobpay (Halal Food Online Store) Application to purchase halal food and other daily necessities.” (P1).

The interview responses corroborate the quantitative findings, underscoring the widespread and consistent use of the Mobpay application among Muslim students in South Korea. This regular and frequent usage highlights the app’s practicality, reliability, and effectiveness in addressing the unique needs of this demographic. Its role extends beyond merely locating halal food, encompassing the provision of other essential items, which makes it an indispensable resource for Muslim students living in a predominantly non-Muslim society. The high acceptance and frequent utilisation of Mobpay reflect its significant contribution to facilitating the dietary and daily living requirements of Muslim students, further demonstrating its relevance and value within this context.

In conclusion, the Mobpay application stands out as a comprehensive and reliable solution that effectively addresses the diverse needs of Muslim students in South Korea. It plays an essential role in providing access to halal food and other necessities, earning widespread acceptance and strong recommendations within the Muslim student community. Its impact is amplified by its intuitive interface, absence of fees or advertisements, and extensive product offerings, making it an indispensable tool for navigating the challenges of being a religious minority in South Korea. By empowering students to uphold their dietary and religious practices while accessing essential goods with ease, the Mobpay application enhances their overall quality of life, solidifying its importance as a vital resource for Muslim students studying abroad.

Conclusion

The issue of halal food is a critical concern for Muslim students studying in South Korea, particularly those attending Kangwon National University in Samcheok, given the country’s relatively small Muslim minority population. This concern is heightened by the challenges these students face in accessing and identifying appropriate halal food options. To address these challenges, technological advancements have facilitated the development of mobile applications, supported by the South Korean government in collaboration with the Korea Muslim Federation. These applications serve as essential tools, enabling Muslim students to navigate their dietary requirements and maintain their religious practices within a predominantly non-Muslim context.

Among the various halal food applications available, two stand out for their widespread usage and popularity among Muslim students. These applications have proven instrumental in providing resources and solutions tailored to their specific dietary needs. By leveraging technology, these platforms not only support individual dietary preferences but also enhance the overall quality of life for Muslim students living as a minority in South Korea.

An analysis based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis reveals that both applications examined in this study fall within the excellence category

across the four key indicators: Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Behavioral Intention (BI), and Actual System Use (AU). This high rating underscores their effectiveness, reliability, and user-friendliness, making them highly recommended for Muslim students seeking halal food solutions in South Korea.

The findings demonstrate the crucial role these applications play in addressing the unique challenges faced by Muslim students, particularly in a minority context. Their high level of acceptance and functionality reflects the growing importance of technology in supporting cultural and religious practices. By providing accessible, efficient, and reliable solutions, these applications contribute significantly to the ease and convenience of maintaining halal dietary practices for Muslim students in South Korea.

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